

Productivity 101 for entrepreneurs

Here is some useful productivity advice for business people who have recently decided to start their own businesses.

Having dreamt about doing your own thing, you suddenly find yourself at the helm of your own enterprise. A daunting experience at the best of times, it's particularly so for those starting out small, believes David Seinker, founder and CEO of The Business Exchange (TBE), a company that currently offers flexible co-working space throughout Johannesburg and Mauritius.

An entrepreneur himself who left a successful corporate career to pursue his own dream, Seinker knows what it takes.



David Seinker, founder and CEO of The Business Exchange (TBE)

“ One of the biggest challenges, when you start out on your own, is the move away from a stimulating work environment where you’ve been surrounded by like-minded colleagues to what may, to start, be no more than your own desk and chair somewhere. And perhaps the biggest problem within this new environment is getting yourself simply to focus. ”

Passing on the lessons from his own experience, Seinker offers the following advice, which he refers to as his “Five productivity hacks for beginners.”

1. To-do list

Decide on your “big three” at the start of each week, and then create a daily “to do” list.

A daily to-do list is an excellent way to focus your attention as you begin each day and comes with great satisfaction as you cross off an item. But the key, believes Seinker, is to set yourself three key goals at the start of the week and then use your daily to-do list to break them down into manageable parts, numbered in the order of priority.

“And place the thing you dread doing the most at the top of your daily list and get it done first,” says Seinker. “Also try to set time limits to each daily task. Many people work well in office environments because of the pressure they are under from management above them. You’re the boss now; create your own pressure.”

2. Dress for success

More than likely, you’ve moved into a similar field to the one in which you were before, and which probably had a daily dress code of some nature. Even if you’re just moving from your bedroom to a workspace in your lounge, get up each morning as you used to and get dressed as if you were going to an office.



This also helps to break your day into 'at work' and 'after work' hours – particularly important to stimulate your personal energy and gets you motivated to start your workday. “It may seem like a cool idea to now be able to sit at your desk in your dressing gown and slippers. But, just, don't,” recommends Seinker.

3. Take a break

Guilt often weighs heavily on a new entrepreneur – the feeling that you have to work hours and hours on end without taking any breaks at all, with the misconception that tea and lunch breaks were only about the corporate world you left behind. And yet, breaks are important to keep you focused; the well-known concept being that – if you work behind a computer, for example – you should get up and move away from it every 30 to 45 minutes, and take a 5-minute break. Or go walk the dog or spend an hour at the gym.

“It's not just hearsay,” notes Seinker. “While the recommended times between breaks vary, there are numerous research papers out there that prove you actually become more productive if you take regular breaks.” Go on – Google it during your next break.

4. Build up a network with whom to connect

While working alone without distractions can really aid productivity, you may find you can also get quite lonely. One way around this is to form a “digital” network of other entrepreneurs and organise times to go online to connect collectively, exchange work ideas or even just the trials and tribulations of working for yourselves.

Another growing idea these days is to hire a desk or even a small office in a co-working space.

“We've found our spaces are usually populated by communities of like-minded businesses that not only morally support each other but can offer services and other networking opportunities that complement each other,” says Seinker.

5. Learn to say not now rather than no

No matter how well you plan your time and try to focus on creating your core business, other things will parachute in.

But Seinker believes, “The key is not in learning how to say ‘No’ as this could result in a missed opportunity. It’s rather about learning to say ‘Not now.’

In other words, whatever it is, you’ll give it another rethink once you’ve first accomplished what you’re focused on today.”

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